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SLAVERY AND THE BIBLE.

Three millions and a half of our countrymen are slaves. Some of them are made such by the direct action of the General Government. In various ways, the great political parties uphold and extend slavery. Large portions of the Northern church, are in full fellowship with slaveholders, and with dealers in human flesh. The whole country is therefore involved in the system. And it becomes greatly important to understand what the Scriptures teach concerning slavery, and what, if any thing, is Christian duty with reference to it.

What then is American slavery?

1. *Not compulsory labor.* Some have imagined the chief evil of slavery, is being compelled to work at another's will, and without wages. But this is a *mistake*. Disobedient children and idle apprentices, are often, and wisely, compelled to labor, by parents and guardians, against their will, but this never makes them slaves.

2. *So neither is beating and scourging, over working and under feeding slavery.* Many seem to think these are the principal evils of the system, against which anti-slavery men inveigh. But they are mistaken also. Humane people there are at the South, who do not thus abuse their slaves, (though the possession of irresponsible power, always tends to cruelty). So there are brutal men at the North, who beat and variously abuse their own families. But this is not slavery. It was never so accounted.

3. *Denial of the rights of citizenship, is not slavery.* Some have supposed that the various franchises of free-men, constitute the chief things withheld from the negro. But not so. Foreigners, children, females, are not invested with these rights; but they are not thereby enslaved.

4. Nor do all these things together, make up the crime,—comprehend the mighty evils of slavery. They are incidental to the system. They inevitably flow from it, as indeed they do more or less, from other relations of life, and from other states of society.

American slavery is this: Depriving its victims (so far as human power can do it), of all the rights, dignities, and immunities of rational beings; and placing them on a level with brutes and articles of merchandize. This is the radical, vital principle of the system. It turns humanity into chattels. In a word, slavery declares that its victim shall not be regarded, adjudged, disposed of, known in law,—as being *a man, a woman, a child*, but as *a thing*. It may, and in particular instances, doubtless does,—feed and clothe well, and moderately work him,—but the system denies man's rational and moral nature, and thrusts him down to the level of the beasts that perish.

Hence, the South Carolina code (*2 Brevard's Digest*, p. 229) declares, "Slaves shall be deemed, sold, taken, reputed and adjudged in law, to be chattels personal, in the hands of their owners and possessors, their executors, administrators, and assigns, to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever."

The laws of Louisiana describe "a slave as one who is in the power of a master to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his industry, and his labor. He can do nothing, possess nothing, and acquire nothing, but what must belong to his master."

Judge Stroud, the acknowledged expositor of slave laws,

says, "the cardinal principle of slavery, that the slave is not to be reckoned among sentient beings, but among things, as an article of property, a chattel personal,—obtains as undoubted law, in all these states."

This, then, it is, to be an American slave. And we shall search in vain, the records of the darkest ages and most barbarous states,—to find any system of oppression or tyranny, more crushing to body and soul, more terribly armed with cruelty to its victims,—or more disastrous in its effects upon the master than this.

Does the Bible give any sanction or tolerance to such a system?

It is scarcely three-score years and ten, since the patriots and wise men of this Republic solemnly affirmed, "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," &c. For the rectitude of this Declaration, our fathers appealed to God; and for its maintenance, they pledged life and fortune and sacred honor. Do the Scriptures, then, institute, or at all sanction, a system *contrary to self-evident truth*? And has it become necessary to vindicate the Word of God, from the charge of authorizing or abetting the highest forms of crime? Alas, it is even so. Not a few religious people and Christian Divines, in this day, teach that the Old Testament establishes, and the New, instructs us to excuse and fellowship such oppression as the enslavement of innocent men!

Consider: it is plain that American slavery, necessarily violates *the eighth command of the Decalogue*. For the system originated in robbery, and every day, forcibly withholds from its victim, the fruit of his labor, his limbs, his children, and all he holds dear.

It abrogates *the seventh commandment* ; as it places the marriage of slaves on the same level with the herding together of cattle.

It nullifies *the fifth commandment*, prohibiting, absolutely, the child from honoring its parents, and rendering it impossible for slave parents to train up their children.

Slavery breaks down equally, *the tenth commandment*, as it is a perpetual coveting of the poor colored man's wife, his son, his daughter, and all that is his.

Without extending this exposition, to show how the system makes void *the first, fourth, sixth, and ninth commandments* ; also, is it not manifest that American slavery is necessarily and evermore in open defiance of both tables of the moral law ? And yet Theological Doctors and Christian Disciples of eminent position in the land, maintain, that God instituted slavery by the hand of Moses,—and that our Lord Jesus allowed it in the primitive church without rebuke !

That is, stripping their reasonings of glosses and sophistry,—the Holy One introduced into his ancient church, a kind of servitude which perpetually nullified at least *four* of the *ten parts* of His own eternal law ! And the Son of God found among his disciples a system begotten in robbery, which broke up the marital, parental, and filial relations,—causing universal licentiousness,—still He fellowshipped, unrepvingly, those who did these things !

With such blasphemies, more or less disguised and diluted, has the public mind been debauched, and the popular conscience drugged, for years past, from the high places of political and ecclesiastical power in this republic.

But the reader may inquire (and he is certainly entitled to an answer), what was that servitude or bondage, which Moses ordained, and which is thus described in

Leviticus xxv, 44-46. "Both thy bondmen and bondmaids which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you, of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land, and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen forever; but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigor."

Some are ready to ask, was not this substantially slavery? Yet it was appointed of Heaven. We answer, the different features of this bondage,—its whole character,—are thus revealed.

1. All male servants received the rite of circumcision, and were thus taken from heathenism into covenant relation with God,—and all bought or permanent servants, were entitled to enjoy the national festivals and the privileges of the Church. See *Genesis* xvii, 9-14; *Exodus* xii, 43-45; *Deut.* xvi, 13-16. Nothing can be more unlike this, than the treatment of American slaves.

2. The law protected and secured to bondmen their personal rights; that is, their rights of person, family, &c. See *Exodus* xxi, 26-27; *Leviticus* xxiv, 22; *Deut.* xxiv, 14-18; *Isaiah*, i, 13-20; *Jer.* xxi, 12; *Gal.* iv, 1-2. No personal right of American slaves is protected, nor can it be.

3. Servants among the Jews might marry into their master's family and inherit his estate. See *Deut.* xxi, 10-14; *1 Chron.* ii, 34. When the master had no heir, or if his sons dishonored the family by crime or otherwise, servants took the inheritance. See *Gen.* xv, 2-3; *Prov.*

xvii, 2. American slaves have no right of marriage, nor can they inherit any thing.

4. If a Hebrew bondman were wounded or abused, he might leave his master, and no one could compel him back : See *Exodus* xxi, 26-27 ; *Deut.* xxiii, 15-16 ; *Isa.* xvi, 3-4. Our slave code is exactly the opposite of this.

5. If any one was subjected to servitude or bondage, other than by purchase of those who might lawfully sell, (and these seem to have been only the parents, *Exod.* xxi, 7 ; and the individual himself, *Levit.* xxv, 47),—his master was put to death as a man stealer. See *Exodus* xxi, 16. Such an enactment as this, would hang every slaveholder in the Union.

6. Every seventh year, Hebrew born servants were set free ; and every fiftieth year, “liberty was to be proclaimed throughout all the whole land, and to all the inhabitants thereof.” See *Levit.* xxv, 8-13. No year of release ever comes to the American slave, but the year of his death.

Thus by a few brief particulars, are the Old Testament Scriptures, amply vindicated from the aspersions of those who seek to press them into the support of negro slavery.

But this is not all. Some forms of oppression, or national cruelties, or invasion of the rights of man, have existed in almost every nation and in every age. And God has with great emphasis revealed his mind and will concerning these things. Very far has He been from leaving His church unwarned or untaught respecting duty, when in any land the stranger is wronged, a girl is sold for a harlot, or the right of the poor and needy is violently taken away. On no subject, perhaps, (save the advent and character and work of Christ), is the Bible so full and explicit, as in its assertions of the civil and social rights of man ; and in its threatenings against

rulers and people, wherever oppression is allowed. There is no book so thoroughly and radically democratic in its teachings, as the Bible. If the reader doubts this, let him turn to the following passages, as a sample : *Exodus* xxii, 21-24 ; *Deut.* x, 17-19 ; 2 *Samuel* xxiii, 1-3 ; *Job* xxix, 11-17 ; *Psalms* x ; xii, 5 ; lxxii, 4 ; and lxxxii, 1-5 ; *Eccles.* v, 8 ; *Isaiah* xlix, 25-26 ; *Jer.* vii, 5-16 ; *Amos* iv, 1, 2 ; *Malachi* iii, 5-6.

During the ministry of Isaiah, injustice and oppression, though doubtless of a much milder type than our own slavery, had grown up among the tribes. The priests whose duty it was, did not warn the people. God, therefore, sent his prophet to the Senators and Judges and common people, with one of the most stinging and awful messages upon record : " To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord : I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts ? Bring no more vain oblations : incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with : it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear : your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; Learn to do well ; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed ; judge the fatherless ; plead for the widow," *Isaiah* i, 11-17

No one, surely, can fail to see that this Scripture describes in many points, and precisely, our nations cha-

racter and our national acts. And that slavery, or other forms of political injustice, was allowed no fellowship or rest, in the Jewish church, under its Divinely appointed teachings, is quite obvious.

Many years later, certain forms of oppression grew up again in Israel. The poor were in some way robbed of their essential rights. These wrongs were upheld by the civil power, and at least winked at by the church. The oppression may have been "sanctified," by many years of legislation, and guarded by "compromises," on which the union of the tribes was thought to rest. Then existing parties had come to think they could perpetuate the nation's prosperity and glory, without executing judgment and righteousness, and possibly, had voted to "discountenance," and "resist," any further pleading for mercy and truth. The sacred tribe seem to have forgotten their duty; or peradventure they feared to "agitate the church," with topics that were accounted "political." Be this as it may. God sent the prophet Jeremiah to proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, And say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates; Thus saith the Lord, execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor; and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings, sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation," *Jer. xxii, 1-5.*

Consider, for a moment, the application of this message to our own country and to this time: "Thus saith the Lord, (to the king and nobles, not only, but *to the people*), execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor," &c. Every one knows that the very sins here described are perpetuated by our rulers and countrymen, of the free States, as well as of the Southern. And yet, there are churches on every hand, that will not allow this truth preached to them, with application to our nation's acts, and our individual dangers and duty! Many church edifices are scrupulously barred against any such Bible teachings! Is not this an alarming state of things? Will not such congregations be found to have a controversy with their Maker?

"*If ye do this thing indeed,*" continues the prophet, there shall be given you national prosperity and blessing. If we "*do this thing,*" American politicians declare there shall be no prosperity or peace, but the Union shall be destroyed!

"*But if ye will not hear these words,*" to execute judgment and deliver the oppressed, adds the Lord, "*I swear by Myself that this house shall become a desolation.*" Never fear, say our political leaders. Let slavery alone. The nation's interests shall not suffer. We will secure them. And to a wide extent, the Ministry and the Church are dumb before this advancing atheism!

There is not room within the limits of this tract, to show how with a more intense and consuming brightness, if possible, the New Testament precepts encircle every form of tyranny, dark oppression and wrong, than even the revelations of the Old. Nor is this necessary. There is a suspicion even among pro-slavery minds, that when the Saviour came to bring good news to the poor,

(to *all* earth's poor), healing to the broken hearted, deliverance to captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised, His gospel must lie against so hideous a system as negro slavery. Oppressors are not apt to turn to the words of Christ, for justification. They choose rather to burrow amid the types and shadow of the ancient economy, when for the hardness of men's hearts, some evil things were permitted, and when God is said to have winked at the ignorance of the times. But there is no rest for the American slaveholder, or his apologist even there. Not the least.

Now, if peaceful emancipation comes to our land, it will doubtless come as the fruit of Christian effort and Christian influences. And peaceful emancipation, we may hope, is not yet beyond our reach. For, as Albert Barnes truly says, "there is no power *out* of the American Church, that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained *in* it." The national conscience is formed by the current religion. It is in the power of American Christians to create such a moral sentiment, as shall wither and sweep away the last vestige of oppression. But will they do it?

Consider the ~~present~~ position of the different religious sects, in respects to slavery. Careful enquiry is believed to have ascertained, that there are now, (A. D. 1853), *six hundred and sixty thousand slaves, held by ministers and members of the different branches of the Protestant church in this country.* They are distributed substantially thus:—

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| Among Methodists, North and South, | - | - | 218,000 |
| “ Presbyterians, Old and New School, | - | - | 80,000 |
| “ Baptist, | - | - | 125,000 |
| “ Episcopalians, | - | - | 80,000 |
| “ Disciples or Campbellites, | - | - | 100,000 |
| “ Other denominations, about, | - | - | 60,000 |

And what a spectacle to angels and men, is this? Large portions of that church which has been Divinely taught, to loose the bands of wickedness and break every yoke,—to love their neighbor as themselves,—in all things whatsoever, to do to others, as they would be done by; making merchandize of the image of God, buying and selling, like cattle in the market, their own redeemed brethren and sisters! Professed Christian patriots, praying for freedom abroad, and promoting despotism at home! Men grieved and indignant at tyrants in the old world, voting oppressors into power in our own land! Individuals laboring, and anxious to convert heathens on the other side of the globe, while contributing to heathenize our own countrymen and country-women, at the rate of seventy thousand per year! Disciples alarmed at the spread of popery and false doctrine, while they are in open fellowship with slavery, and are walking in church communion with sinners, that imbrute and crush Christ's little ones!

Reader, be not offended; but are not some of these faults chargeable to you?

In conclusion: Does any one ask, what can I do towards the emancipation of the slave? The answer is easy, you can do much.

1. Read, investigate, understand the subject of slavery, in its relations to the Gospel, and in its bearing on all our material interests. A great many have refused hitherto, to do even this.


2. Converse kindly and often with neighbors, endeavoring to persuade them to your views.

3. Pray: Ask for Divine guidance yourself. Seek much for God's blessing upon the wronged slave; and by no means forgetting his unhappy master.

4. Use all Christian fidelity and love, in separating the

churches from the horrible incubus of slavery. Remember that true freedom is not to be maintained in the state, unless it is taught and exemplified in the church.

5. Vote for no man to be ruler, unless well assured that he will execute judgment and righteousness, and secure to all, so far as he can, their inalienable rights.

 Were these simple measures adopted by those who *say* they are opposed to slavery, they would, with the Divine blessing, give emancipation and peace to the land.

“Break ev’ry yoke ;” the Gospel cries,
“ And let th’ oppress’d go free ;”
Let ev’ry burden’d captive rise,
And taste sweet Liberty.

Lord ! when shall man thy voice obey,
And rend each iron chain ?
Oh ! when shall Love its golden sway,
O’er all the earth maintain ?

Send thy good Spirit from above,
And melt the’ oppressor’s heart ;
Send swift deliv’rance to the slave,
And bid his woes depart.

With joy and gladness crown his day,
And fill his heart with love ;
Teach him the strait and only way,
That leads to rest above.